

90TH SPACE WING

Francis E. Warren Air Force Base

by Ms Michelle Strickland

Amidst the high grassy plains of Wyoming stands Francis E. Warren Air Force Base. The base has a rich heritage in US and Air Force history and holds the distinction of being the oldest, continuously operational Air Force base. Its modest beginnings date back to 1867 when the trans-continental railroad established its headquarters in what was later to become the city of Cheyenne. The US Cavalry then built Fort D.A. Russell as a post with a mission of protecting the construction effort and its workers from hostile Native American tribes. Both the city of Cheyenne and F.E. Warren AFB have a long vivid history together.

When the post was established as a permanent fort in 1884, the Army built red brick structures to house the troops, as well as their horses and mules. Between 1885 and 1933, 156 brick quarters were added. The distinct architecture endured and today, many buildings throughout the base command a spot on the national historical register. The buildings' interiors now contain homes, administrative offices, training areas, dormitories, and warehouses.

In 1930, the post was renamed Ft Francis E. Warren, in honor of Wyoming's first governor. The Air Force inherited the post in 1949, making it F.E. Warren AFB. Its mission has continuously evolved to meet current global defense needs. Today, the base houses 20th Air Force Headquarters and the 90th Space Wing. Twentieth Air Force is unique in that it has dual responsibilities to Air Force Space Command and United States Strategic Command with a mission of protecting the US with strong strategic deterrence.

The 90th SW is the single, most powerful combat unit in the free world maintaining the nation's largest and most modern strategic missile unit with 150 Minuteman III and 50 Peacekeeper missiles. Missile crews are tasked with the daunting mission of keeping these missiles on alert, ready to launch upon Presidential order. Two hundred fifty-one launch crews maintain round-the-clock vigilance in underground alert launch control centers while nearly 900 security force troops guard the perimeter. Cadres of more than 1,000 highly trained technicians perform continual maintenance on the missiles and the facilities to keep the vigilance high. As a vital part of this mission, the wing flies the UH-1N Huey helicopter—the only flying organization on the base. Twenty missile sites encompass a 12,600 square-mile area in Wyoming, Nebraska, and Colorado; thus, most of the personnel assigned to the base spend the majority of their time actually away from it, performing their duties, literally, in the field. The closest launch facility is 23 miles from the base, the farthest is 152 miles, so keeping this mission on the road requires approximately 840 vehicles driving well over a million miles annually.

The base enjoys a unique and enduring relationship with Cheyenne, Wyoming's capital city. The city itself is small, claiming 50,008 residents, and the base's economic impact on the area is \$222.6 million per year. With a base populace of approximately 4,500 assigned personnel, not to mention their families, it is easy to see how F.E. Warren AFB constitutes a great piece of Cheyenne's economic pie. Cooperative efforts between senior leadership and the civilian community ensure a mutually supportive alliance that benefits both sides. It is not unusual to see military faces volunteering for local events, such as the annual Cheyenne Frontier Days. Military and civilian personnel



alike donate time, money, and their talents for Adopt a School programs, Meals on Wheels, Big Brothers/Sisters, and many more volunteer community support programs. One often sees base representatives honored at civic functions, or as part of community boards of directors. The retiree population is unusually high in the area, serving as the backbone of many enduring military traditions.

Strong financial management and leadership provided by the men and women of the 90th Comptroller Squadron supports the members of the 90th Space Wing and 20th Air Force as they accomplish their vital mission. Normal duty hours don't apply here, so financial services personnel continually find new ways to bring their services to the people. Customer service teams go to the customer at work centers and the base clinic in order to provide much needed support that otherwise couldn't be obtained. Customer service and support personnel make continuous, revolving visits to individual squadrons providing information and assistance to individuals during training times, commander's calls, and special briefings. Annually, 10,000 in-house customers wait less than 5 minutes for service, with fewer than one percent needing a return visit. Monthly, we process over 3,000 pay-affecting documents within two workdays at an unprecedented 98.5 percent accuracy rate, proving the 90th Comptroller Squadron is truly leading the way in customer service initiatives and professionalism.

Premier budgeting helped support a 99+ percent alert rate in fiscal year 1999. Annual O&M budgets in excess of \$91 million provide Warren personnel the funds to operate and maintain control, as well as support quality of life projects. Maintaining high missile alert rates is a must, so base financial managers have been given considerable flexibility in financial planning and funding to best accomplish each organization's individual mission. Strong ongoing partnerships between the financial analysis office and base financial managers ensure mission requirements and regulatory adherence are properly balanced.

Preserving the base's history can be a real challenge for financial managers as buildings become antiquated in the new millenium. The base has developed a Warren Infrastructure Now (WIN) plan, a \$31 million, 5-year roadmap for repairing and remodeling the deteriorated infrastructure of a frontier infantry and cavalry post while ensuring mission needs are first and foremost. Emphasis on dorm upgrades, roads, medical care, communications, service programs, and missile field operations keep the men and women of the Mighty Ninety focused and at peak readiness levels.

